

TO: House Federal Relations, Energy, and Telecommunications Committee Members
FROM: Jennifer Hill-Hart
DATE: 01/24/07
RE: HB 301 – Secure and sustainable energy policy act

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to you today. I am here to encourage you to support House Bill 301. For the record, my name is Jennifer Hill-Hart. This bill would not only demonstrate Montana's commitment to reducing greenhouse gases and an effort to stop climate change, but recognizes the importance of energy conservation and energy efficiency as a priority in Montana. Because we are aware that fossil fuels are becoming more and more scarce, there is absolutely no reason why we should not be making significant efforts toward responsible and sustainable energy choices in this country.

While it is important to develop energy policy that would "represent the least social, environmental, and economic costs" this language does not adequately support energy policy in Montana with "the greatest long-term benefits to Montana citizens". The full costs of fossil fuels include not only the initial costs of construction and operation, but also the cost to the environment. These "externalities" – the costs typically not captured in the market price – include air pollution, water use, and land use from mining. HB 301 recognizes the inherent flaw of fossil fuel dependence and demonstrates Montana's commitment to comprehensive, responsible energy independence by encouraging a deliberate and predictable transition from a fossil fuel-based energy supply system to one that emphasizes conservation and renewable energy as the most secure, sustainable, and affordable options for meeting our energy needs.

HB 301 encourages conservation and efficiency by recognizing the efforts innovative Montanans are making to protect and preserve not only our energy future, but also the environmental and economic future of this state and country. By emphasizing the use of many small-scale, dispersed, locally-owned generation facilities, as opposed to a few, centralized large-scale facilities, Montana's energy needs would not only be met efficiently and affordably, but local, community-based investment in energy supports local farmers and local industry alike. With a demonstrated shift toward conservation and sustainable, clean energy policy, Montana's agricultural communities and industry can receive a much needed boost, without diverting precious water sources, scarring the land, or leaving a mess behind for our children and our children's children, to clean up.

What better way to support Montanans, of all incomes, than by saving them money through conservation and efficiency, rather than encouraging inaccurate energy costs through inappropriate fossil fuel industry subsidies?

I encourage you to support HB 301 and thus support energy independence with conservation and renewable energy policy. Lets end our reliance on fossil fuels by supporting our energy and economic future, and of course our environment, right here in Montana. Thank you.